kinbrace

WELCOMING REFUGEE CLAIMANTS

Impact Report

2025-2026

Photo: Alexandra Dawley

Our Mission

The Kinbrace community welcomes refugee claimants with housing, education, and support.

Territorial Acknowledgement

We respectfully acknowledge that we live, work, and gather on the traditional, unceded lands of the Coast Salish peoples, including the xʷməθkʷəy̓ əm (Musqueam), Sḵwx̱ wú7mesh (Squamish), and səl̓ ilwətaʔɬ (Tsleil-Waututh) Nations.

While their histories are distinct, Indigenous communities and refugee claimants share experiences of forced displacement, family separation, cultural suppression, colonization, and marginalization. At Kinbrace, we hold the tension of offering welcome and refuge on Indigenous lands, acknowledging both the complexities and contradictions this reality brings. We are committed to advancing truth and reconciliation in our work, with Indigenous peoples' voices at the centre of this journey toward dignity, belonging, and justice.

Our Shared Dream

A world of welcome, a community of belonging, and a life of opportunity for each refugee claimant.

Cover image: Maleekah, a local high-school student, volunteered faithfully at the weekly community meals, sharing hospitality with newly arrived refugee claimants.

Photo: Miladi Rajabi

Kinbrace = kinship + embrace

Zahra and Esmael express gratitude for the gift of welcome they received from the Kinbrace community. Welcoming them was equally a gift. You'll find their story inside.

Message from the

Board of Directors

Photo: Alexandra Dawley

Left to right: Natasha Wallace (Treasurer), Brendan Morey, Rosemary Toye, Raymond Fung, Maria Zerjav (Chair), Oleh Ilnyckyj
Not pictured: Randall Cohn (Secretary), David Nacho

This year has been one of transition, strengthening, and continued commitment to Kinbrace's strategic vision: *inspiring transformative communities where refugee claimants and Canadians flourish together.*

At the heart of Kinbrace remains a deeply personal welcome. In east Vancouver, 77 refugee claimants received personalized settlement supports and encountered opportunities for mutually transformative connection within the Kinbrace transitional housing community. Across Canada, this same welcome was felt by more than 188,000 individuals who accessed the My Refugee Claim public legal education resources, helping them become informed, connected, and prepared throughout their refugee claim journey.

As a Board, we continued strengthening the foundations that sustain this growing impact. We invested in our governance capacity through training and coaching and updated and adopted policies supporting the safety and wellbeing of our community.

This was also a significant year of leadership transition. Following a thorough and widespread hiring and discernment process, we are thrilled to have appointed Kinbrace's own Alexandra Dawley to lead Kinbrace into its next chapter.

We move forward with deep gratitude for the staff, volunteers, partners, supporters, and refugee claimants who make Kinbrace the transformational community it is.

Maria Zerjav
Board Chair

Esmael, Zahra, and Omid sit on the Kinbrace stairs that ascend to what was their first safe home in Canada. Thanks to their own strength, endurance, and inspiration, and to Kinbrace's community of welcome just when they needed it most, the family are now settled into permanent housing.

Photo: Milad Rajabi

Our Story

Esmael & Zahra

WE FLED OUR HOME COUNTRY because of persecution as a minority ethnic and religious group that is suffering genocide for a century. This has become more intense with the new regime which made life impossible for us in our country and city.

Fortunately, we were able to obtain a Brazilian humanitarian visa and we came to Brazil. After spending a few days in the airport and then in the camp, we found that the condition was not good and suitable for newcomers, so we decided to start our journey to Canada.

We knew that we had a very dangerous journey ahead of us but we had no choice. We walked endlessly through the jungles, mountains and roads. Sometimes we were unable to walk at all. Only the fear of dying in the Jungle and becoming prey for wild animals made us get up and walk again. Our journey through the most dangerous and longest route for immigrants took 70 days to reach Canada.

When we arrived in Canada, in Vancouver, again we had very difficult days for a while.

We arrived in October 2023. The weather was very cold and my wife was sick. We were looking for shelters but unfortunately, the shelters had no space to stay even for one night. With the guidance of one of the immigrants who had arrived earlier, we went to a men's emergency shelter downtown. Because the weather was cold on the street, they prepared a place for my wife and I in the corridor. We could only stay inside from 9PM to 5AM. Eating enough food, having warm clothes and sleeping comfortably for even an hour had become an unattainable dream for us. The night passed like a nightmare and the days were cold and sad.

After 10 days, we found separate shelters – one for my wife, and one for me. We dreamed that one day we could stay together again.

After one month and half staying in the separate shelter I received a call. The woman talked about a transition house and said, "You and your wife can live here."

I became happy and thought this must be a shelter where we can live together.

Without wasting any time, I called Zahra and we went together to see the house that we thought was a shelter. When we saw the house, we were really surprised. I thanked God and I thanked the woman who is now one of our best friends. Her name is Amanda.

From the bottom of our hearts, we said with enthusiasm, "We are coming to stay!"

That day was a Christmas party and Kinbrace had dinner in the evening.

After a long and tiring journey and spending time in various shelters, that Christmas evening in Kinbrace was the first dinner where we had enough food.

All the people in Kinbrace kindly welcomed us with some Christmas gifts. It was the first night that we slept well in a comfortable and affordable house.

I will never forget the happiness of my wife Zahra, who kept repeating how much God loves us and helps us through Kinbrace. We were thankful from the bottom of our hearts.

Photo: Esmael Sakhi Zada

Zahra's gift for cooking was generously shared throughout the community during the months she and Esmael lived in the Kinbrace community. Famous for her bread, here she is making kofta.

Photo: Mark Janousek

Keen to help others traveling the path to safety, Esmael and Zahra participated in the 2025 Ride for Refuge, contributing their time and care to help raise $102,019.

Impact

Housing & Settlement

Photo: Alexandra Dawley

The Housing and Settlement team supported 77 new arrivals and former residents with wrap-around support this year, helping navigate the numerous complexities refugee claimants encounter as they settle in Canada. Celebrating successes and milestones along the way is often planned, but more often spontaneous.

The Kinbrace community meets the immediate and urgent needs that refugee claimants face upon arrival in Canada. Once safely in Kinbrace's transitional housing, each person is supported with wrap-around services and accompaniment by dedicated staff and volunteers, ensuring dignity, stability and belonging.

The comprehensive and personalized case management settlement model Kinbrace uses continued to bring clarity, coordination, and care for the journey alongside each refugee claimant.

77 new arrivals and former residents received support

31 individuals received transitional housing and accompaniment

26 individuals moved from transitional housing into permanent housing

Led by and for refugee claimant women, the cross-cultural wellness program created opportunities for current and past residents to connect, share their cultures, lead activities, and explore the natural beauty of Vancouver together through hands-on workshops and community activities.

8 wellness events

46 women and children participated

Photo: Allison McKnight

The women's wellness group deepened community through shared experiences of learning and connection with beauty, dignity, and belonging.

Impact

Community

Photo: Alexandra Dawley

Celebration–one of Kinbrace's five core values–acknowledges the loss and the joy inherent in a community that welcomes those impacted by global forced displacement. Sara, Refugee Protection Coordinator, celebrates at the Summer BBQ.

Photo: Loren Balisky

This year, 35 newcomers, volunteers, and staff ventured across from BC's mainland to Anvil Island to participate in the annual summer camping trip. Volunteers Lucas, Stephen, and Michelle, along with a team, cooked delicious meals.

The hospitality expressed through Kinbrace is marked by living together: refugee claimants with a community of welcome. Belonging grows strong when each person is both welcomer and guest, regardless of background or experience. Kinbrace's five core values hold and nurture this transitional housing community where intention meets need, and vulnerabilities encounter care.

49	Community meals
26	volunteers cooking, gardening, connecting and supporting, building community
1	amazing summer camp on Anvil Island
countless	spontaneous moments, shared cups of tea, fresh baked goods and quiet moments of connection

Photo: Loren Balisky

Once settled into permanent housing, former residents often stop by the Kinbrace community to catch up and share good news, as Liza recently did. She's starting her own food business!

Impact

Refugee Protection

Making a refugee claim is complex and can be overwhelming — especially for those newly arrived in Canada who seek safety. Without clear guidance, a refugee claimant risks making mistakes that could cost them the safety and protection they urgently need.

Photo: Alexandra Dawley

The nation-wide network of collaborating agencies, funders, creatives, and experts who support Kinbrace's My Refugee Claim resources reached 188,000 people with accessible public legal education and information.

This year, access to justice for refugee claimants in Canada increased significantly, with the www.MyRefugeeClaim.ca website, the Orientation Booklet, and the Ready Tours now available to refugee claimants across Canada in their own language. Thanks to the law foundations of BC, Alberta, and Ontario for their funding collaboration.

188,000 active users on www.MyRefugeeClaim.ca

19,905 Orientation Booklets printed and distributed to 80+ partner agencies across Canada

94 Ready Tours (Hearing + Appeal) with 2,785 refugee claimants and service providers registered

97% of refugee claimants who completed the post-Ready Tour survey said they would recommend Ready Tours to a friend

Kinbrace's Refugee Protection team shares resources at the annual Canadian Council for Refugees consultation, an excellent place to network with colleagues in the sector.

Challenges & Triumphs

Global forced displacement continued at record highs this year, with the United Nations estimating 117.8 million people displaced at the end of 2025.

113,090 refugee claims were made in Canada in 2025.

Meanwhile, countries like Canada took steps to make it more difficult for people seeking asylum. In March 2026, Bill C-12 introduced new eligibility rules that limit access to the refugee protection process for some people seeking asylum in Canada. Alongside ongoing legislative, policy, and procedural changes, these developments mean that many people seeking protection are no longer eligible to have their refugee claim heard by the Refugee Protection Division of the Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada.

The Board of Directors invested significant time and care in strengthening Kinbrace's governance practices and leading a thorough search for our next Executive Director. We are delighted that this process led us to a leader from within Kinbrace: Alexandra Dawley, formerly our Director of Programs and Communications.

This transition marks an important milestone in Kinbrace's story as we move beyond our founding leadership, grounded in a strong organizational foundation and well-positioned for the years ahead.

Kinbrace Staff & Host Community

Left to Right
Back Row: Angela Lam, Laura Wallis-Wood, Sara Maria Gomez Lopez, Stephanie Loli Silva, Habiba Hussaini, Alexandra Dawley, Khanda Ali, Amanda McConville, Adriana Zepeda
Front Row: Jamie Turner, Jason Lam, Milad Rajabi
Not Pictured: Mohammed Zaqout, Masi Allahverdi, Loren Balisky, Sophia Underhill, Allison McKnight, Kerry Forsythe

Deeply committed to Kinbrace's five core values, each staff and host community member comes to the team bringing their unique traditions, languages, and life experiences, with an open heart to learn and change.

Alexandra (Alex) Dawley (left) was appointed as Kinbrace's new Executive Director in April 2026. Loren Balisky (right), outgoing Executive Director, supports the leadership transition, focusing on donor engagement.

Refugee claimants benefit from your immediate, ongoing support.

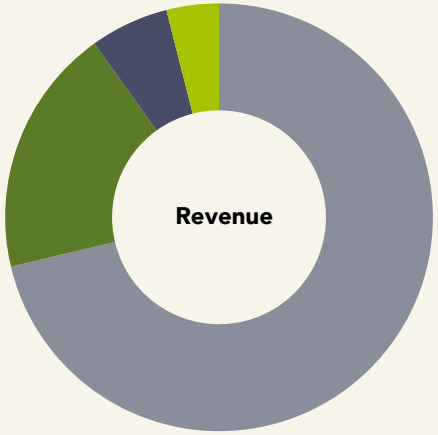
Yes! I want to donate now to provide safety to a person seeking refugee protection

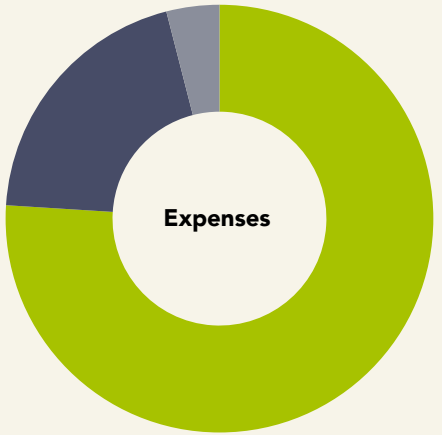
Yes! I want to volunteer to give, learn, and grow

Financials

2025–2026

Fiscal year May–April





72%	Not-for-profit organizations	$1,388,598
19%	Donations from individuals	$363,392
6%	Fundraising events	$110,172
4%	Other income	$70,830
	Total	**$1,932,992**

76%	Programs	$1,374,417
20%	Administration	$361,200
4%	Fundraising	$78,157
	Total	**$1,813,774**

Approved Financial Statements available at kinbrace.ca/annual-reports

Thank You to each supporter who contributed to the fulfillment of Kinbrace's mandate this year.

Kinbrace's Five Core Values

Welcome We are in solidarity: bearing witness to exile, we live with refugee claimants.

Trust We are a community: affirming dignity, we commit to the best in one another.

Mutual Transformation We are diverse: striving to listen well, we learn and grow.

Celebration We are grateful: amidst joy and sorrow, we discover hope.

Prayer We are sojourners: held by grace, we journey into the mystery and love of God.

kinbrace
WELCOMING REFUGEE CLAIMANTS

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Kinbrace Community Society is incorporated in British Columbia (S0058365) and charitably registered by Canada Revenue Agency (80276 4209 RR0001).